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Elk In Arizona's High Country



United States
Department of
Agriculture

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Forest
Service

Apache-Sitgreave
National
Forest

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Partners

Partners in History



Arizona, a state
and the Apache

National Forest

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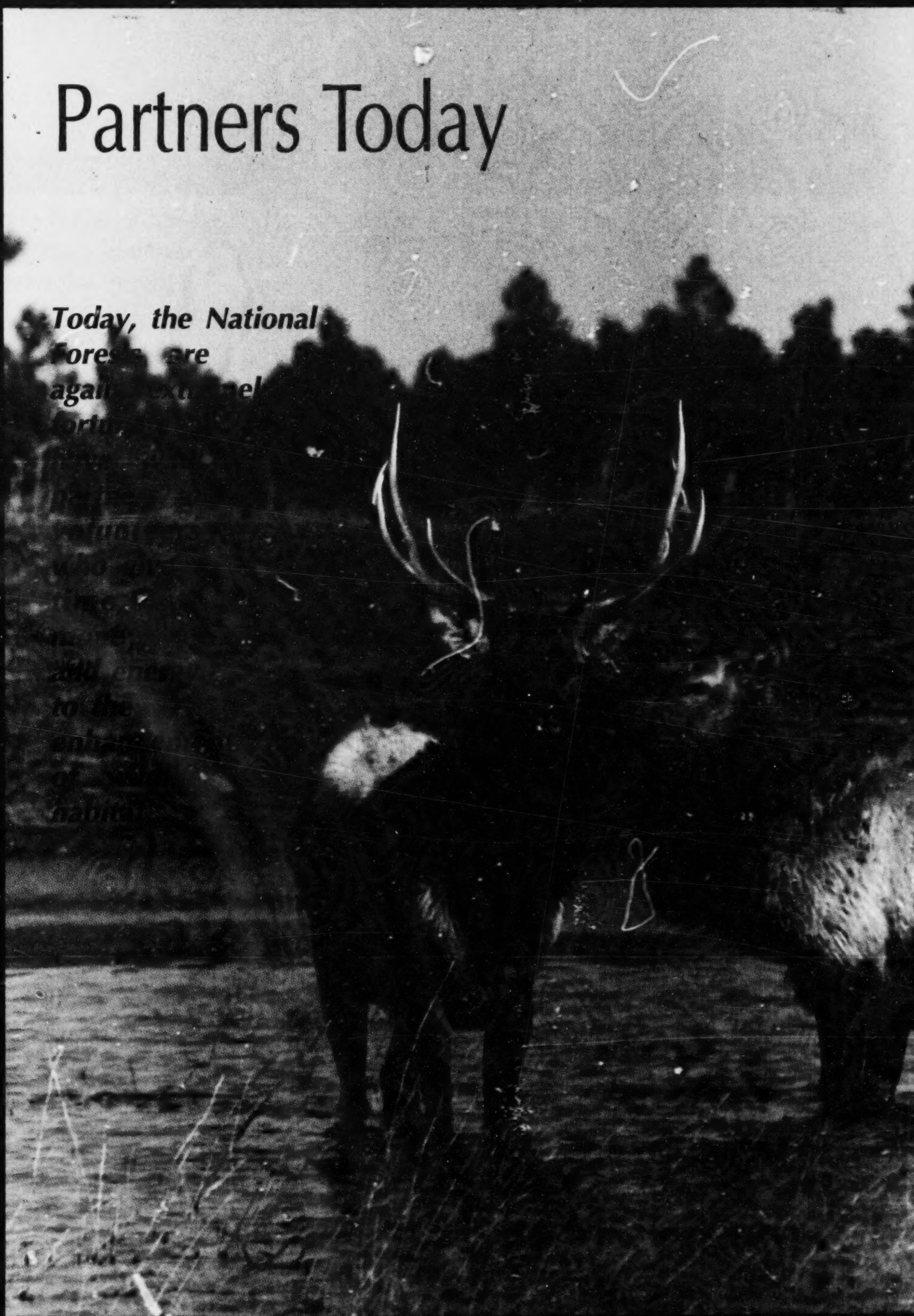
of generations

and the

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Partners

Partners Today



Today, the National
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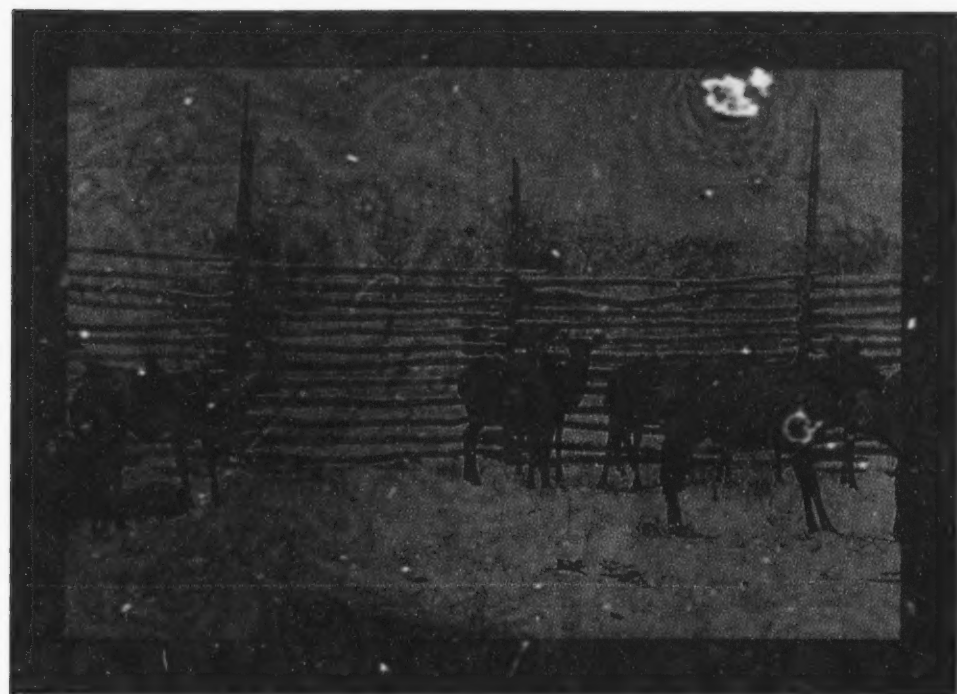
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Partners in History

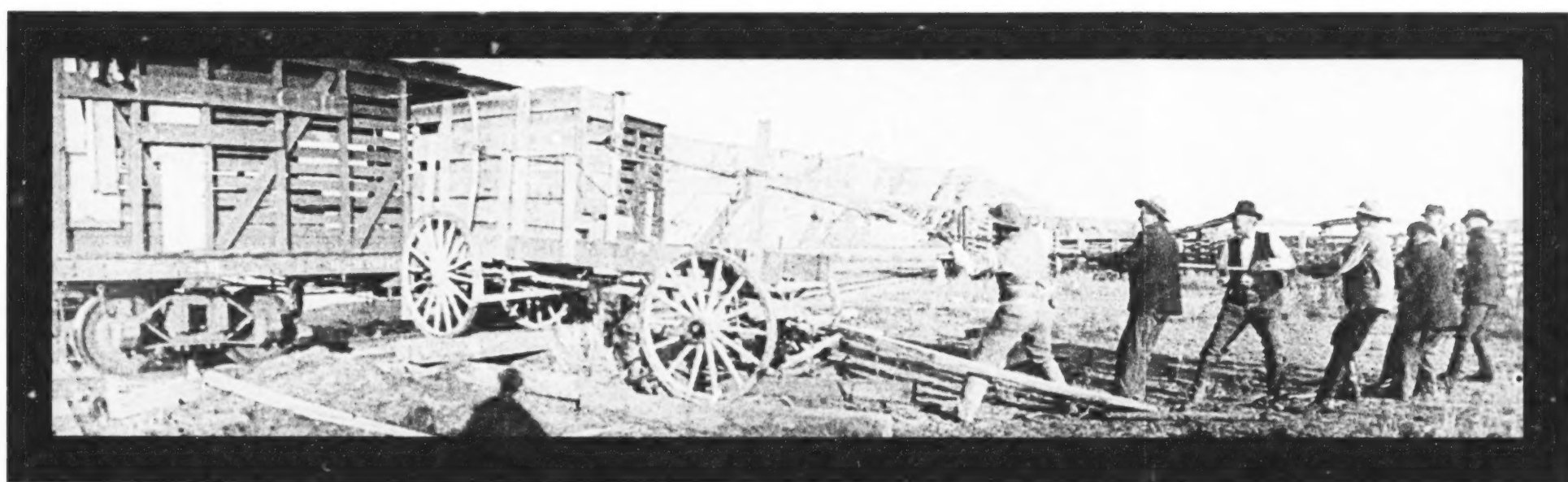


The last Merriam's elk in Arizona was reportedly taken near Mt. Baldy in the White Mountains in the late 1890s. This was indeed a tragic event in the wildlife history of the Southwest. But out of this tragedy began a spirit of cooperation that still exists today, stronger than ever!

Arizona as a state and the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest in particular have enjoyed a long history of

generous and caring wildlife partners throughout much of the twentieth century. Rocky Mountain elk partnerships can be traced back to the 1900s, when a concerned individual in Prescott, Arizona named Dr. Robert Looney, put his own money on the line to transplant elk from Yellowstone.

In 1913, the Apache-Sitgreaves benefitted from one of the greatest wildlife volunteer projects in the history of Arizona elk management. Winslow Elks Lodge No. 536 launched a project to introduce Rocky Mountain elk into ranges previously occupied by Merriam's elk. Lodge members and others spent 26 days enroute to the final transplant area near Cabin Draw on the Sitgreaves National Forest. Only two elk were lost out of the original 86 that started out weeks earlier from Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Today, there is a viable population of elk on the Apache-Sitgreaves of around 9,000.



Why More Projects?

Partnership projects are necessary to help alleviate hot spots where elk winter range and private land depredation creates conflicts. New winter range forage areas will be created to attract elk and hold them off private lands. Partnership projects also enhance habitat on public lands by improving the quality and quantity of forage. These projects will also provide additional livestock forage.

Projects are designed to not only address habitat improvement based upon biological considerations, but also political considerations as well.

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest and Arizona Game and Fish Department have developed a "Five-Year Wildlife Action Plan" which identifies and sets priorities for all wildlife projects.

The top projects in this action plan are selected for Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation matching grant funds.



What Can You Do?

Get Involved! We welcome all the help you can provide. Join a conservation group, call your local ranger, donate your skills, time, and even money if you so desire. The best thing about volunteering is the satisfaction of seeing the results of on-the-ground elk habitat improvement projects.

Whether you are a hunter, casual observer, or an avid photographer, come join us — Partner!

Partners Today

Today, the National Forests are again extremely fortunate to have wildlife partners and volunteers who give time, money, and energy to the enhancement of wildlife habitat for the Rocky Mountain elk. Partnerships abound between land management agencies, ranchers, the timber industry, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, and of course with conservation groups like the Arizona Wildlife Federation and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

Underscoring the present widespread interest in elk management is the fact that membership in wildlife conservation groups grew rapidly in the 70s and into the 1980s. One example is the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF). Founded in mid-1984, membership grew rapidly to over 50,000 by the end of the decade.

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest is more than just a casual recipient of benefits from the generosity of groups like RMEF. For instance in 1988, the Apache-Sitgreaves and

Arizona Game and Fish Department received matching funds from RMEF in excess of \$150,000. This money was earmarked for some 20 different projects on just the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. The significance of this amount isn't apparent until you realize this was almost 40% of RMEF's 1988 project funding budget for the entire nation.

In that same year, in addition to National Forest funding and matching funds from RMEF and other partner participation, the Apache-Sitgreaves received an additional \$70,000 worth of equipment use from the Arizona Game and Fish Department. The future looks just as bright for the Challenge Cost Share program for the next decade.

Specifically, partners and forest wildlife managers are completing "on-the-ground" habitat improvement projects. Projects ranging from purchasing seed and salt, constructing water developments, interpretive signing, to creating openings for improved forage.

